

**MINUTES OF A JOINT WORK SESSION HELD BY VINTON TOWN COUNCIL WITH
THE VINTON PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE VINTON BOARD OF ZONING
APPEALS ON TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 2010 AT THE VINTON WAR MEMORIAL
LOCATED AT 814 WASHINGTON AVENUE, VINTON, VIRGINIA**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Bradley E. Grose, Mayor
Robert R. Altice
Carolyn D. Fidler
W. Wesley Nance
Matthew S. Hare

PLANNING COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Dave Jones, Chairman
William Booth
Paul Mason
Dawn Michelsen
Robert Patterson

BOARD OF ZONING APPEALS MEMBERS PRESENT: Robert Benninger, Chairman
Donald Altice
Allen Kasey
Frederick "Mick" Michelsen

ABSENT: Debra Hagins
Craig Sheets, Alternate

Following a warm welcome and comments from the Mayor, everyone introduced themselves. The Town Clerk called the roll for Town Council and the Planning Director called the roll for the Planning Commission and the Board of Zoning Appeals.

The Town Manager introduced Lindsey Blankenship, a Planner from Roanoke County, who presented an over-view of the Vinton Area Corridor Study, a joint planning initiative between the Town of Vinton and Roanoke County. She reviewed several areas of the Corridor Study in which she was currently involved and noted that much information on the Corridor Study was available on Roanoke County's website.

Following Ms. Blankenship's presentation, the Vice Mayor commented on the Façade Program and noted that a property on Lee Avenue slated to become a restaurant, was a recipient of Façade grant funds. Mr. Lawrence added that the former location of Vinton Bookkeeping that is now Neilly's Accounting Services, was also a recipient of Façade Program funding.

Mr. Nance asked if the Façade Program would be expanded and was advised by Mr. Lawrence that he felt it would be expanded in the near future. He added that he felt that most people located in the Façade grant area that want to get involved in the program, have done so. Ms. McMillan noted that there are several businesses along Hardy Road and Washington Avenue that would like to see that area included in the Façade Grant Program. She added that they would also like to see a similar grant program developed for change of use from residential to business use. Mr. Lawrence added that there is money available for change of use, none of which has been used at this point.

The Mayor asked if the locations for the bus shelters had been finalized. Ms. McMillan responded that Mike Kennedy, Consuella Caudill and she have looked at different sites for the first bus shelter and feel that the best location would be in front of the Vinton Library. She stated that staff is now waiting for Roanoke County Board of Supervisor's review and approval before submitting the site to Valley Metro. Mr. Kennedy reported that the second location for the bus shelter would be in front of First Citizens Bank which would probably not work. Ms. McMillan noted that a third and fourth site for a bus shelter is in front of McDonalds and on Walnut Avenue.

Mr. Kennedy reported on the Walnut Avenue Improvement Project. He briefly explained the VDOT program that would be funding this project called Urban Highway Construction. During his report, he noted that funding is based on population with a 2% share of the project being funded by the Town.

Mr. Kennedy reported that there would be two defined projects, one would be the replacement of the Walnut Avenue Bridge and the other, which is in the very early planning stages, would be the Lee Avenue intersection improvement. He advised that a third and final project would expand the project up to 1st Street but has not yet been defined because it has not been funded.

The Public Works Director reported that a citizen informational meeting on the issue had been held in May with 10 people in attendance. He noted that at that time they had addressed the options for putting the bridge in place. The options were to close the existing site and detour the traffic for 12 to 15 months and build a temporary bridge; close the old bridge and detour traffic; and lastly, staged construction (build ½ of the bridge at a time and then route traffic to travel on that half while the other half is being constructed).

Mr. Kennedy noted that construction of the new bridge will not begin until 2014 due to environmental issues that have to be worked out. He further noted that the cost estimate for the project is \$1.8 million to \$2 million. The new bridge would handle daily traffic of 8,300 vehicles; it will be from 70 to 75 feet long with a width of 50 feet. He advised that the height of the bridge will increase by 2 to 3 feet. Mr. Kennedy pointed out that the height increase along with the channel improvements would decrease the amount of flooding significantly although it would continue to flood. At this point, he displayed a schematic of how the proposed bridge and the area around it would look. Mr. Kennedy noted that the bridge would have open railings so that water can flow freely over it.

Mr. Jones pointed out that the staged plan (chosen by a majority of people at the public meeting) makes the most sense. He went on to say that if traffic has to be detoured, the only route would have to be through Midway and its roads could not handle Walnut Avenue traffic volume.

In further discussion, Mr. Kennedy stated that the proposed bridge will handle a multitude of needs and that staged construction would be the most cost effective way to build it. Ms. Fidler asked about utilities that are connected to the bridge. Mr. Kennedy replied that the only utility is a gas line and it will be relocated.

In conclusion, Mr. Kennedy advised Council that if they agree to what he is presenting for the Walnut Avenue Bridge replacement, he will give VDOT the okay to go ahead with finalizing the design for the project. Council concurred with Mr. Kennedy's recommendations for the bridge replacement..

Ms. McMillan gave an update on the Downtown Master Plan. She reported that the Town applied for a planning grant from the Department of Housing and Community Development(DHCD) and received a \$35,000 grant, of which \$32,000 was used to hire a consultant to assist in the preparation of the downtown plan. She further reported that part of the \$32,000 was used for an economic restructuring plan which involved the process of determining several options for “branding” for the community. Mr. Lawrence reported that developing a brand will be a very important piece of the overall master plan. He went on to say that the branding and tag line has not yet been finalized.

Ms. McMillan discussed the planning process for the Downtown Master Plan and pointed out the kinds of businesses that would be good for the downtown area. She identified five major areas in the town and noted recommended improvements for them. Also discussed was the rendering of proposed improvements for the old Vinton Ford Building on Pollard Street.

Ms. Fidler inquired as to how or whether the proposed improvements would affect future parades, festivals, etc. Mr. Lawrence responded that the medians will result in some complications for these events but can be worked out. He went on to say that this plan is conceptual and not a formal plan

Ms. McMillan reported that Mr. Dunman wishes to move his floral business from the Pollard Street location and to convert his existing space to mixed use retail. Another option noted would be to move the Vinton Library into the space. Ms. McMillan advised that another issue needing consideration is whether the Zoning Ordinance should be amended to require special use permits for gas stations and big box stores like Lowes or Walmart.

Ms. McMillan pointed out that she had included cost estimates in their packets for each of the five development areas that were previously mentioned at a total of \$1,000,000 and would be included in a CDBG grant request. She stated that the money spent would have to create jobs or new businesses and affordable housing for lower and moderate income residents.

The Planning Director advised that she would be meeting with State representatives the following week to update them on what the Town will need for funding and to see whether or not the Town would qualify for a CDBG grant.

Ms. McMillan noted that the Downtown Plan has not been adopted by Vinton Town Council and would need to be reviewed by the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission would then forward the Plan to Town Council with a recommendation for Town Council’s consideration. She stated her wish to forward the Plan to the Planning Commission in January.

The Mayor asked if the Town would be locked into the entire concept if the grant is approved. Ms. McMillan reassured him that they would have three months before applying for the grant to put the details in place. She added that the project would be done in phases if the grant is approved. She asked that Council advise her of any changes to the Plan as soon as possible.

Mr. Jones pointed out that the Town would need to fix the drainage problem at the Post Office before any other improvements can be accomplished. Mr. Altice agreed but noted that there is no funding to do it. Mr. Kennedy added that it could take up to \$600,000 to put in a storm drain in that area.

Mr. Hare questioned the long term relationship for improvements on property that is privately owned. Mr. Lawrence replied that he did not have an answer to the question but would look into the matter and get back to him.

Following further discussion, the meeting adjourned at 8:00 p.m.

APPROVED:

Bradley E. Grose, Mayor

ATTEST:

Darleen R. Bailey, Town Clerk